

we'd be successful," Sherman said. "We always tried to find gear our friends would buy, or that we would want to buy."

Outdoor Gear Exchange also does an online business account for 25 percent of its sales and growing, nearly doubling this year. Sherman was able to consolidate his online staff from where they were, in a space above The Body Shop on Church Street, to offices in his new space. Although he doesn't release sales figures, Sherman did say his annual payroll approaches \$1 million.

With all the extra space to work with in the new location, Sherman and co-owner Mike Donohue are getting into gear for family camping, also known as car camping, which will put them in competition with Dick's Sporting Goods in Williston. Traditionally, Outdoor Gear Exchange has focused on backpackers, climbers and hikers, "folks going out into the wilderness," Sherman said, and who place a high value on lightweight gear.

But Sherman said family camping is a growing segment of the market, especially for people his age—45 years old. It's not inexpensive to get into, but once you're set up, it is a relatively cheap vacation. The priorities for the gear are different than those for hikers and climbers.

"Car camping is a little more focused on amenities and space, as opposed to weight," Sherman said. "We'll offer tents with more features oriented toward cushy living, thicker sleeping pads, things like that."

Sherman also plans to expand his offering of casual outdoor clothing to include lower price ranges than he has historically stocked, in memory of the recently departed Old Navy.

"We're sensitive to the fact that Old Navy provided a service to folks who couldn't afford more expensive clothing," Sherman said. "Whether it was high quality or not, the bottom line is it was highly affordable. We want to make sure that doesn't become a void in the downtown, so we'll look for outdoor casual that's more affordable than what we currently sell."

Eventually, Sherman plans to add another 8,000 square feet of retail space in the basement of his new space, which he is also leasing. Panera Bread, the national chain of bakery-cafes, will also be on the main floor of the building as the only other tenant, although there will be no physical connection between the two businesses. Panera isn't expected to open for another month or two.

"I hope we get some bread smell, but that's about it," Sherman said.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO BILL GIPSON

• Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, Bill Gipson, president and chief executive officer of Empire District Electric Company, is retiring on May 31, 2011. Bill is an example of the American dream: humble beginnings, hardworking, successful and modest.

Bill, a native of Jasper County, MO, worked his way through Missouri Southern State University earning a degree in management technology. He went to work at Empire in 1981. He was director of the utility's commercial operations and economic development departments before becoming executive vice-president in 2001 and then chief operating officer. Bill has been a member of Empire's board of directors and has served as president and chief executive

officer since 2002. During Bill's tenure as president, Empire District Electric Company's assets have doubled.

Involvement in the community has been one of Bill's trademarks. Bill is a past chairman of the Joplin Chamber of Commerce, the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and the Missouri Energy Development Association. Additionally, Bill is on the Missouri Southern State University School of Business Advisory Council, the Missouri Southern State University Foundation and a member of Rotary International.

At their annual banquet on May 5, 2011, the Joplin Chamber of Commerce named Bill the Outstanding Citizen of the Year.

Bill and his wife of 33 years, Tracy, are looking forward to their retirement home on Table Rock Lake, but I know Bill Gipson's contributions to Missouri will continue for years to come. ●

#### NORTH CAROLINA VETERANS PARK

• Mr. BURR. Mr. President, today I join with the citizens of North Carolina who have a long and proud history since the Nation's birth of paying special honor and respect to its sons and daughters who protect our country's freedoms. Americans from coast to coast enjoy their freedoms because of the service and sacrifices of our veterans. North Carolina is proud to be the home of Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station, Charlotte Air National Guard, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City, Fort Bragg, Pope Army Air Field, Marine Corps Air Station New River, and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. We are proud to be a state that one of the largest populations of veterans in the United States call home.

North Carolina has a rich military history dating back to before the Revolutionary War. In a 1771 rebellion against the royal governor, North Carolina farmers called "Regulators" employed tactics at Alamance Battle-ground that were later adopted as a model for fighting the British. Troops from North Carolina played a significant role in many Civil War battles, including the Battle of Gettysburg, where "Tar Heels" were prominent in Pickett's Charge. Many of the 86,000 North Carolinians who served in World War I were assigned to the 30th Infantry Division, which distinguished itself in the Somme Offensive by breaking through the famed and supposedly impregnable "Hindenburg Line," helping to hasten the end of the conflict. During World War II, the U.S. Marine Corps trained their first class of African Americans at Montford Point Base, near Camp Lejeune, and members of the North Carolina National Guard landed on the Normandy beaches. During the war in Southeast Asia soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg deployed to participate in the Tet Offensive and remained in theater

for 22 months. Airmen flying F-15E's from the 4th Fighter Wing out of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base were the first to lead nighttime strikes against Iraqi forces during Operation Desert Storm and helped bring the Persian Gulf war to a swift conclusion. Elements of the 2nd Marine Division from Camp Lejeune crossed into Iraq on the first day of the ground war in Operation Iraqi Freedom and later forged relationships with the Sunni tribes in Iraq's restive Anbar Province. Elite Green Berets from Fort Bragg have been operating throughout Afghanistan, expanding Village Stability Operations and seeking out terrorist leaders. And members of the Coast Guard's National Strike Force based in Elizabeth City responded to the devastating earthquakes in Haiti by conducting facility inspections around crippled Haitian ports to help resume the vital supply of aid to that poverty stricken nation.

This Fourth of July will hold special significance for North Carolina. On that day in Fayetteville, NC home to Fort Bragg, where the renowned 82nd Airborne, Eighteenth Airborne Corps, U.S. Army's Special Operations Command, and Pope Army Airfield are located, there will be a dedication of the North Carolina Veterans Park. The purpose of the Veterans Park is to honor all North Carolina veterans and serve as a centerpiece for a compilation of historic objects and images and landscaped spaces that symbolize a Nation's unending gratitude, somber reflection, and ongoing education for generations to come. It will commemorate the achievement, service, dedication, and sacrifice of our Armed Forces.

The park is adjacent to the Airborne and Special Operations Museum, which is a part of the U.S. Army Museum System, providing an exceptional educational experience and preserving the legacy of airborne and special operations forces from their early days in World War Two to the present operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and across the globe.

The city of Fayetteville has directed that the design and construction of the North Carolina Veterans Park meet or exceed all the guidelines and expectations provided by a large representative segment of the veteran population, including members of a content committee who served in all five branches of the military services: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force.

The Park consists of seven water features and public art crafted by individuals from across the State. The hands of 100 veterans were cast to honor and represent every county in North Carolina and are displayed in this park's Wall of Oath. Soil from each of the State's 100 counties will be included in the construction of the columns in the park. The sculptures in the public plaza signify our veterans' commitment, courage, dedication, heroism,